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REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON ITS TWENTY-SIXTH SESSION

Draft report

Addendum

Rapporteur: Jothan Anthony MWANIKI (Kenya)

Chapter ___. INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC CLASSIFICATIONS

International Classification of Status in Employment (ICSE)

1. The Commission considered item 5 of its agenda at its 439th meeting, on 5 February 1991. It had before it the report of the International Labour Office on the progress of work on the International Classification of Status in Employment (ICSE) (E/CN.3/1991/14).

2. The Commission was informed that the report contained information on the work done since the twenty-fifth session of the Commission. It was further informed that the schedule of work included a meeting of experts, to be convened by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) at Geneva early in 1992, to advise the ILO Bureau of Statistics on a draft revision of the classification for consideration by both the Fifteenth International Conference of Labour Statisticians held at Geneva in January 1993, and the twenty-seventh session of the Statistical Commission in 1993.

3. The Commission welcomed the ILO initiative to review ICSE which, it was noted, had remained virtually unchanged since it was first elaborated some 40 years ago. Many members and organizations expressed interest in the idea of expanding ICSE to reflect already existing practices in countries in order to enhance its usefulness.

4. Some members, however, expressed concern about the applicability to censuses and labour force surveys of the proposed definitions based on the criteria of "economic risks" and control. It was mentioned that field inquiries in many countries used self-assessment by respondents for reporting their status in employment and as a result the proposed criteria might raise difficulty. A point was also made on the ideological connotation of the term "economic risks" in certain countries where the phrase had often been used in a specific sense describing aspects of employer-employee relationships.

5. Several members pointed out that the revised ICSE should adequately take into account the situation of transition economies of the Eastern and Central European countries, particularly with regard to the new forms of enterprise ownership, joint-stock companies and co-operatives. The need for applicability in countries with centrally planned economies, where the employer-employee relationship did not exist in the traditional sense, was also stressed.

6. Questions were raised about the applicability of some of the existing categories of ICSE to developing countries - in particular, the categories of unpaid family workers and own-account workers. It was reported that the requirements of family relationship and household membership implied in the present definition of an unpaid family worker were unduly restrictive. With regard to own-account workers, it was mentioned that many respondents in surveys who were operating an enterprise did not consider the engagement of a relative, even if paid, as an employee and, consequently, they might classify themselves as own-account workers rather than employers.

7. The Commission stressed the need for a clear framework enabling the statistical treatment of particular borderline categories, including multiple jobholders, seasonal workers, temporary and permanent workers, homeworkers, marginal workers, casual workers, managers and directors who did not own the enterprises in which they worked, members of the armed forces and members of religious institutions.

8. Finally, several members pointed out their recent country experiences in examining their national classifications of status in employment and their willingness to contribute to the work of the proposed ILO meeting of experts.

9. The Commission noted the existing close co-operation between the International Labour Office and the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat in the context of population and housing census recommendations. The Commission reaffirmed its central interest in the work on ICSE. It noted that the existing classification of status in employment at the one-digit level had formed a part of the United Nations Population and Housing Census Recommendations over the past several decades as adopted by the Commission. Accordingly, the Commission considered that the proposed revised classification should be submitted to the Commission for adoption as well as to the International Conference of Labour Statisticians. In addition, the Commission reiterated that ICSE should remain distinct without overlapping with the revised International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities (ISIC) and the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO).

Action taken by the Commission

10. The Commission:

(a) Endorsed the time schedule and future work on the International Classification of Status in Employment (ICSE) by the International Labour Office in collaboration with the Statistical Office of the United Nations Secretariat and other interested organizations;

(b) Strongly supported the ILO proposal to convene an expert group meeting on ICSE and recommended that the Group extensively consider the concerns mentioned in paragraphs 5-7 above;

(c) Requested the International Labour Office to prepare for the Commission, at its twenty-seventh session, a report on the International Classification of Status in Employment (ICSE), given the Commission's continued role with respect to this classification.